Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-10. (canceled)

11. (currently amended) An optical cross-connect system, located in an optical network, the optical cross-connect system comprising:

a spare port to transmit low priority data to or from a router that is external to the optical cross-connect system; and

a working port to transmit high priority data to or from a primary router that is external to the optical cross-connect system, where the working port is connected to the router in response to receiving, from the primary router, an out-of-band signal indicating a failure of the primary router, via an Internet Protocol address associated with the optical cross-connect system, and where the transmission of low priority data, to or from the router, is to be preempted by the transmission of the high priority data, to or from the router, in response to the failure f the primary router.

12-20. (canceled)

21. (new) A method implemented by an optical cross-connect system (OXC), located in an optical network, the method comprising:

transmitting, from a spare port of the OXC, low priority data to or from a router that is external to the OXC;

transmitting, from a working port of the OXC, high priority data to or from a primary router that is external to the OXC;

connecting the working port of the OXC to the router in response to receiving, from the primary router, an out-of-band signal indicating a failure of the primary router, via an Internet Protocol address associated with the OXC; and

preempting the transmission of low priority data, to or from the router, by the transmission of the high priority data, to or from the router, in response to the failure of the primary router.

22. (new) An optical cross-connect system, located in an optical network, the optical cross-connect system comprising:

a spare port to transmit low priority data to or from a router that is external to the optical cross-connect system; and

a working port to transmit high priority data to or from a primary router that is external to the optical cross-connect system, where the working port is connected to the router in response to receiving, from the primary router, a signal indicating a failure of the primary router, and where the transmission of low priority data, to or from the router, is to be preempted by the transmission of the high priority data, to or from the router, in response to the failure f the primary router.

23. (new) The optical cross-connect system of claim 22, where the signal is an in-band signal.

24. (new) The optical cross-connect system of claim 22, where the in-band signal is a Synchronous Optical Network (SONET) signal.